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Written statement* submitted by the Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The alarming upward trend of child addiction and the necessity of taking serious actions on this regard by the governments of the world

For a long time, addiction has been counted as one of the most serious conflicts of human being communities. So many positive actions have been done to mitigate the effects of the issue on the human society. Although, several agencies ranging from police forces of countries to UNODC and from local NGOs to major supporting government agencies are working together to combat the scourge of addiction and drug trafficking; the drug lords and traffickers in all these years have tried to strengthen themselves, become more powerful and updated their business strategies. In the new world, we see that the drug mafia has targeted its inhumane strategies based on seeking profits out of the market of the target group of children. This is a serious crisis threatens entire human society and the future generations. It is necessary to contemplate and implement so applicable oriented mechanisms to restrain the issue.

Many children, living in issue-prone marginalized areas of cities in developing countries or countries which are the destinations of refugees, are confronted with problems due to the conditions of their environment. Among the issues they face, it can be noted that most of them are deprived of education or have abandoned the school. These children have not been trained considerably in life skills and have not been learnt appropriate knowledge to know the consequences of drug consumption. As a result, they are not strongly able to detect the threats of drugs and prevent themselves of getting addicted by falling into the traps of traffickers.

In most marginalized areas it can be seen that drug traffickers recruit mentioned children to provide their gang members for sales and distribution. Victims first fall into the traps of merchants of death, then get used to drugs, becoming addicts and after all will easily be added to the groups of sellers and distributors. It is important to note that recruitment of children in such a process is easier and faster in comparison to an adult with intellectual development; however, the rehabilitation process for a child is much harder. Such an approach is one of the factors of consolidation and expansion of the drug market.

In addition, child victims due to lack of protective trainings, inability in prospecting visions and instantaneous pleasure of drug abuse, are easily prepared to do anything. Among the consequences of the addiction issue which can be added to innocent children's lives, these subjects must be noted: addicted-child victims because of having no jobs and no income may be taken into prostitution or drug trafficking to afford consumption costs. Moreover, they are less inclined to education and learning. After a while, they run away from home and given the lack of adequate protection and effective laws in some communities, they will get more involved by the consequences of abandoning home and the dilemma of homelessness. Eventually, some of them become street children and do robbery attacks to supply their consumption needs.

On the other hand, some of the aforementioned children get addicted to drugs by extremists to being recruited as child soldiers in terrorist attacks. For instance, following the sayings of Mashpee, the rapper artist, he was kidnapped at the age of nine by terrorist groups to be exploited as a child soldier. Mashpee says that he and many other children were infected with drugs by these groups to lose the control of their determination and spirit doing murder and other acts of violence.

Afghanistan, as one of the largest producers of opium in the world, is a high-risk area for children. There are reports on taking advantage of children in order to do drug trafficking, especially in the borders and examples of child addiction in this country have been recorded. According to released reports, in recent years with the support of international organizations the first rehabilitation center for addicted-child victims in this country have been stablished as a pilot study. This reflects the importance and magnitude of the issue and its need to be addressed.

It is worth noting that the huge rate of immigration of refugees to European countries in recent years can transmit the severity of mentioned issue from the Middle East to Europe. For example, IAPSRS recently have seen the remarkable migration of some Afghan families who were involved with substance dependency issues to European countries. If the age of drug consumption in these families, as in the noticed countries affected by the crisis, is declined we would see a growth in the number of addicted-child victims soon in European states which are the destinations of immigrants. Therefore, this issue requires the attention of the council to human rights issues arising from child addiction around the world with the aim of reducing the rate of drug consumption by innocent children.

Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran with common land boarders to Afghanistan has always been considered as a transit route for drug trafficking, by the traffickers. This issue has led to make anti-drug activities become a complex and costly process in Iran. Although, positive steps in fighting against drug trafficking and the issue of consumption

have been conducted by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran; drug traffickers are continuing their ruthless acts potently in the country. Extensive dimensions of the issue demonstrate the inability of the government in tackling with the struggle, thoroughly. IAPSRS NGO in its field researches in the past year and a half alongside with its relief actions in supporting children in the marginalized areas of the country has been encountered with 135 addicted-child victims including Afghan refugee children and children of socially disadvantaged Iranian families. Though, the government has given promises to NGOs for planning to support these children; unfortunately, still no standard supporting centers to protect rehabilitation of these children benefiting the last knowledge and expertise of the world have been stablished. It seems, the growing number of detected addicted-child victims in recent years esteems from some main reasons, especially the recent attention of the active drug mafia in Iran to the market aimed at children.
In that children usually are trustful by the community and they can easily arouse sympathy, drug traffickers misuse them simply to aid their distribution networks; and no one, even the police, casts doubt on them. These victims recruited in the distribution networks are low-income reliable workers in comparison to adults for the traffickers. The painful consequence that must be noted is the fact that child addiction will destroy the determination of the future generations affected. The outcome of the issue not only in national scale but also in regional and international scales would indicate ruining effects. Therefore, the cessation of child addiction phenomenon and rehabilitation and integration of even one addicted-child victim to the society should be become one of the most important human right mandates of the international community and the council.

In this regard:

1- It is recommended a special reporter on the impacts of drug trafficking and addiction on human rights of children affected or under affection be appointed by the council. The results of the reports by the SR would be utilized for planning serious pervasive struggles with the issue worldwide.
2- The states in hazardous addiction-prone zones should be called by the council to establish special supportive rehabilitation centers for addicted children and the ones who are at high-risk of addiction. International specialized standards for rehabilitation and integration of the target group to the society should be implemented by experts and followed in the mentioned centers under the supervision of pertinent international bodies and NGOs.
3- Due to incompetent supportive laws defending the rights of children got addicted or under the threat of addiction in some states, the council should stress legislation on child custody deprivation laws for those who are at risk of drug consumption because of their irresponsible parents and high-risk their behaviors.
4- Because, child addiction is not only a regional conflict for some states but a universal issue threatens human beings generations, the council should call on the states of the world to design and add some high quality protective life skill trainings to school schedules in different educational levels. It is a significant action has to be carried out first by the states that have high rates of consumption or are located on the main drug transit routes.